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Ethics of Incorporation: (Im)possibility of Accepting Otherness in Kawabata's *One Arm*

Abstract: On touching, an object mediates and equally prevents our contacts with others. But what if one incorporates other's body? Japanese author Kawabata Yasunari, in his 'One Arm', describes a peculiar encounter with the other's body: the protagonist's replaces his arm with a girl's arm and incorporates her arm, causing him some spasm, the sense of otherness, and affective as well as repulsive feeling. This replacement of body parts questions the possibility of getting in touch with the other, as well as risky intersections with the other. Considering this (fictional) bodily encounter and the process of being together with another body, I aim to examine the rupture of contact, the (im)possibility of accepting otherness, and the ethics of communication in Kawabata, through the phenomenon of incorporation. By examining the under-researched topic of incorporation and touch in Kawabata in dialogue with relevant theories by Jean-Luc Nancy, Emmanuel Levinas and Melanie Klein, this paper aims to advance theorisations of touch and incorporation at the intersection of literature and critical theories.

Introduction: Incorporating affection as well as repulsion

“I can let you have one of my arms for the night”, says the girl to the protagonist. She removes her right arm at the shoulder and uses her left hand to lay it on the protagonist's knee. The girl's right arm is still warm (Kawabata 1969: 103). This is the beginning of a short story, 'One Arm' (originally published as '*Kataude*'), written by Japanese author Kawabata Yasunari in 1964. Kawabata (1899–1972), the first Japanese Nobel Prize-winning author, played a pivotal role in a pre-war Japanese literary group called *Shinkankaku-ha* (New Sensationalist School), organised in 1924, trying to capture immediate sensations through language while applying this sensibility in his literary creations. Regarding the description of perceptual experiences, Kawabata's protagonists are generally hesitant to conduct even surface contact with others; descriptions of touch are carefully hidden for a combination of aesthetic and censorial reasons. Despite such a careful attention to physical contact and a subtle tension between touching and not touching in Kawabata's works, an arm is radically joined with another's body in 'One Arm': the male protagonist incorporating the girl's arm

and suddenly wrenching off of the arm due to his realisation of repulsive touch with his own arm. This story makes the reader aware how difficult it is to accept the alterity of the other's body,¹ even when the bodies are in contact. By focusing on the phenomenon of touch, especially in a form of incorporation represented in this story, this essay first examines how the senses of otherness, displacement and incorporation of the other's body occur in 'One Arm'; second, it delves into the ethical question of how it is possible to embrace the otherness of another's body within oneself. As this essay's investigation demonstrates, I examine the neglected topic of incorporation as well as surface touch in Kawabata's work in a dialogue with relevant critical theories. This essay not only fills research gaps in the literary study of Kawabata, but also aims to advance theorisations of contact at the intersection of Japanese literature and critical theories. Especially in this paper, I pay attention to the radical shift in 'One Arm' between touch and incorporation, both being forms of contact but the shift being a 'gap' or rupture that has not been addressed.

In 'One Arm', the readers witness an extremely fast shift from a subtle surface contact through nails and fingertips, to a sudden incorporation of the girl's arm, to a violent wrenching off of it. But one would normally experience incorporation, including the mother's breast, while having enough *skinship* (a Japanese-English coinage to signify intimate communication through touch, mainly between the mother figure and child). In such a sudden process, the protagonist struggles with the very (im)possibility of fully accepting the otherness of the girl's arm and experiencing spasms – affective as well as repulsive touch. A radical shift from hesitancy for subtle touch, incorporation, to a diabolic wrenching off demonstrates a leap: a sudden rupture of ethics. Incorporation is an essential and primary experience in the early stage of one's life to physically realise the difference between the self

¹ Alterity used in this article means 'otherness', mainly stemming from Emmanuel Levinas, recognition of which can contribute to the construction of an identity. The use of the capital 'O' in 'Other' also often appears in Continental philosophy or more recently in cultural discourse on difference, to differentiate the radical 'Other' as an element to define or constitute the self from a more general 'other'. This use of 'Other' appears in Levinas, Sartre, Lacan and other thinkers.

and the world, starting with the mother's breast, and to negotiate with it or accept/reject it. In addition, Luce Irigaray still sees in the cultivation of touch and one's erotic life the most intimate core of oneself (Irigaray 2011: 138–139). Corporeal unity, which is not exclusive to sexual experiences but includes a wide range of tactile experiences, is also a crucial element for adult identity. Despite the important function of incorporation in one's life, Kawabata's 'One Arm' has not been discussed through this lens; this story, in particular, is a rare example that subtly but radically bridges the experiences of surface touch and incorporation by depicting the shift between these two different but inseparable types of bodily experience and the sudden rupture of contact and ethics. In this paper, while employing relevant theorisations such as Kleinian psychoanalysis and Levinassian phenomenology regarding incorporation and touch, I aim to examine the ethics of incorporation in Kawabata, in particular, regarding the (im)possibility of accepting otherness.

According to French psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, the first use of the term 'incorporation' appears in Sigmund Freud's 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' in 1905, with instincts involved in the procedure of incorporation at the oral stage. Starting from oral incorporation and the infant's relation to the mother's breast as the prototype of a 'good' object, Melanie Klein further develops the coincidence of sexual mastery over the object and the destruction of it in her discussion of the oral-sadistic impulse (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988: 211–212). By 'incorporation', I mean having another's body (part) inside one's own and engaging with the alterity of another's body. In 'One Arm', a girl lends the male protagonist her arm for one night, permitting him to replace her arm with his. The protagonist takes her arm beneath his coat to his room, in fear of people noticing it. Safely in his flat, the protagonist observes her arm under the play of light, subtly touches the nails and fingertips, and 'talks' with her (arm). Becoming interested in her, he unknowingly replaces his arm with hers. Shortly after the incorporation of the girl's arm, there is an

unreachable gap between her arm and the rest of his body. Then, the two unite peacefully without disruption, and he sleeps. But when he wakes, with the repulsive touch of his arm thrown on the floor, he wrenches off her arm and replaces his. The spasm occurred soon after the incorporation makes him aware of the otherness of her body. It poses us, the readers, the question of to what extent one can receive another's body within one body, especially given the protagonist's wrenching off of the girl's arm at the end. Through his following concerns about proper blood flow, his disturbing her purity, and the sudden realisation of alterity within his body, he encounters 'her' with both repulsion and affection.

Although there is always a question regarding applicability of psychoanalysis as a cultural theory – whether one can transfer psychoanalytic theory into another cultural or linguistic context, especially in Asia where psychoanalysis is not much practiced – observation-based Kleinian theory seems to create less of a gap for cross-cultural application than theorists with a particular linguistic nature, like Lacan. Both Japanese literary critic Karatani Kōjin and psychoanalyst Shingū Kazushige refer to Lacan's comments on the limits of psychoanalytic practice in Japan due to its language system: Japanese speakers constantly use Chinese and Japanese in the communication between the unconscious and spoken language (Karatani 2002: 75–76), and are fragmented between *on* and *kun* (Japanese and Chinese) readings, between speech and writing, and between Japanese and Chinese characters (Shingū 2010: 264). Moreover, the Kleinian focus on the mother works well in the Japanese psychic climate, where early childhood parental relations are heavily centred on mother and child.² Even in the analysis of the contemporary phenomenon *hikikomori* (literally meaning 'withdrawal') in Japan in which one stays at home without social participation but without psychic disorder, psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki finds an adherent relationship with the mother,

² See Doi Takeo's theory of *amae*, which Doi considers is prevalent in the Japanese society, starting from the dependence between the mother and child (Doi 1971); Jungian Psychologist Kawai Hayao analyses the ego as symbolised by female figures in fairy tales (Kawai 1991); Yoda Tomiko examines the construction of a maternal society, particularly in postwar Japan (Yoda 2000).

causing a difficulty for children in constructing an appropriate distance from the other (Saitō 2003). Additionally, considering the fact that the Kleinian ‘position’ is not necessarily a definitive developmental process like a Freudian ‘stage’, and that one may come back to the same position later in life, the Kleinian theory of incorporation is helpful not only to analyse the mother-infant relationship but also the communication between adults. In this paper, rather than asking the limit of theoretical application and separating the Japanese case from Western theories, I aim to create a dialogue or creative mobility between the two.

To begin this essay, I will examine the possibility of representing touch in Kawabata in the next section, while briefly looking at some attempts to theorise touch, such as those by Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre and Jean-Luc Nancy.

The possibility of touching the other

Kawabata’s protagonists are often reticent to touch. For example, in the novel *Thousand Cranes* (originally published as *Senbazuru* in 1952), the protagonist Kikuji fails to touch the lip print of his now-dead loved one, Mrs. Ota. She left a brown stain on her tea bowl touched by her red lip, which arouses in him ‘a nauseating sense of uncleanness and an overpowering fascination’ (Kawabata 1971: 179). This story portrays Kikuji’s subtle attempts at touching the loved one—her mark as absence. Because Kikuji hesitates to touch the stain, which symbolises intimacy between the two, union with Mrs. Ota is never attainable. Historian Matt Matsuda, in his analysis of modernity in post-war Japan and its aesthetics in relation to France, writes about French Japanologist Jean-Jacques Origas’s comments on Japanese tradition: “‘It is the result of efforts, ruptures, repetitions, and failures.’ [...] everything characterized by an “imprecise localization.” Kawabata’s [narrative view] is so much the opposite of a European monumentalized past’ (Matsuda 2002: 25). In this manner of understanding, Kawabata represents the nature of rupture and de-centralisation in Japanese culture, rather than the

centralised and monumentalised past. This analysis can also be observed in *Thousand Cranes*, as Kikuji remains undecided in the rupture between desire and hesitancy to touch the mark, reachability and unreachability of the mark, and communication with the mark (the absent body) in place of the lived body. In addition, the point of contact (between Kikuji and Mrs. Ota) is never precisely localised in the novel; eventually, Mrs. Ota's daughter Fumiko throws the tea bowl on the stone in the garden and the broken part bearing the lip print is lost.

Writing about the communication with the loved figure in Kawabata, modernist writer Yoshiyuki Junnosuke (1924–1994) comments that Kawabata prefers the beauty of a 'passing female' like a scene, not of a woman with actual engagement (Yoshiyuki 1972: 271). The author Yoshiyuki possessed a heightened awareness of the senses experienced through the skin from his particular attention to senses, sexuality and the body. In opposition to Yoshiyuki, who wrote a female body as an object of actual physical engagement, female beauty in Kawabata does not necessarily stem from the protagonists' interactions with an actual woman; rather from fantasising her existence. Literary scholar Van C. Gessel also writes about Kawabata: 'If this is a love story, it is one played out with the principals at considerable distance from one another, seeking something intensely private rather than any sort of interpersonal involvement' (Gessel 1993: 162). Kawabata's protagonists, in the examples above, are hesitant to touch others, almost withdrawing from the possibility of touch. If there is ever any touch, the protagonists are extremely self-conscious about interactions with the female figure, who is represented as almost unreachable. When actual touch is represented, it is touch with a body part as in *One Arm*, or with a sleeping body as in *House of the Sleeping Beauties* (originally published as *Nemureru Bijo* in 1961). The male protagonists in Kawabata tend to defer tactual encounters with the female body, since they choose seeing and passing the beauty over holding it.

This hesitance of actual contact when writing about touch is not limited to

Kawabata, but is also applicable to Emmanuel Levinas, who certainly contributed to the theorisation of touch – especially that of caress. The touch in Levinas similarly seems to escape rather than take hold:

The caress consists in seizing upon nothing, in soliciting what ceaselessly escapes its form toward a future never future enough, in soliciting what slips away as though it *were not yet*. It *searches*, it forges. It is not an intentionality of disclosure but of search: a movement unto the invisible. In a certain sense it *expresses* love, but suffers from an inability to tell it. (Levinas 1969: 257–258)

The tender correlative of the carnal caress is not about the material body per se, or the living body, or even bodily expression, but rather about the body that is beyond existence. In caressing the girl's arm beneath his coat to take it to his room, Kawabata's protagonist narrates, 'I had to touch the coat from time to time with my left hand to be sure that the arm was still there. Probably I was making sure not of the arm's presence but of my own happiness' (Kawabata 1969: 104). Being unable to really engage with its existence, the beloved remains in a state of virginity, as Levinas writes, the feminine being 'an incessant recommencement of virginity, the untouchable in the very contact of voluptuousness, future in the present' (Levinas 1969: 258). The act of touching becomes further idealised and fantasised also for Kawabata, as the girl in 'One Arm' is kept 'untouched' out of the protagonist's fear of disturbing or wish for preserving her purity. The protagonist narrates:

Carefully hidden under my raincoat, the girl's arm was colder than my hand. I was giddy from the racing of my heart, and I knew that my hand would be hot. I wanted the warmth to stay as it was, the warmth of the girl herself. And the slight coolness in my hand passed on to me the pleasure [*itooshisa* in the original] of the arm. It was like her breasts, not yet touched by a man. (Kawabata 1969: 105–106; 1967: 139)

Especially in such a case, it is not necessarily easy to determine what constitutes touch. Do desire, gaze and fantasy possess haptic functions and touch the other? Does the skin mediate or prevent touch with the perceptions of previous touch on its surface? Is touch

always already mediated by other touches, memories, culturally-formed bodily practices and values, and the verbalisation of sensations?³ Moreover, in articulating the relations with others, Sartre writes: ‘the caress is not a simple stroking: it is a *shaping*. In caressing the Other, I cause her flesh to be born beneath my caress, under my fingers’ (Sartre 2005: 411–412). Touching the other here can also mean shaping the other, or creating the other at the moment of contact. It is not only the skin indicating the presence of others from the past inscribed on it, but also touch itself indicating the presence of the other, by the very act of touching. By closely analysing the contact between the protagonist and the arm in ‘One Arm’ in the next section, I will examine how spasm and the sense of otherness through incorporation occur in the middle of subtle surface contact, how they develop and how they could possibly be compromised.

Reaching the other and leaving the other through touch

Amongst thinkers who have theorised touch, Nancy finds an essential element of touch not only in the nature of reaching the other but in that of leaving the other. Nancy’s concept of contact necessarily coincides with departure or distancing: ‘a touching that, of itself, distances and impedes itself’ (Nancy 2008: 42), in which touch is identical to its withdrawal. In Nancy’s account, touch is more about weight, site, moment and dis-location:

The stone, no doubt, does not ‘handle’ things (*betasten*), as Heidegger writes [...] But it does *touch*—or it *touches on*—with a passive transitivity. It is touched, same difference. The brute entelechy of sense: it is in contact, an absolute difference and an absolute *différance*. There is difference of places—that is to say, place—dis-location, without appropriation one place by another. There is not ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ but, rather, there are sites and places, distances: a possible *world* that is

³ See Marcel Mauss’ analysis of body practices and techniques that are special to certain cultures and societies (Mauss 1973); Eyal Ben-Ari’s discussion on unconsciously formed individual’s body practices through participating in a group in a Japanese context (Ben-Ari 1997) and Kaja Silverman’s construction of the ego by combining Lacanian visual imago and Freudian bodily ego as a ‘threshold’, and the values attached to the body (Silverman 1996).

already a world. (Nancy 1997: 61)⁴

Nancy considers Heidegger's treatment of touch as one that appropriates another. Since the body in Nancy 'leaves' one place for another in touching, touch for him is about distance or displacement, rather than the possession of another. Similarly, incorporation in Kawabata, which is a very radical form of contact and the action of which not only touches but takes the external object in, is not necessarily an appropriation of another if we pay attention to the girl's permission for the protagonist to replace her arm with his; "I don't suppose you'll try to change it for your own arm," she said. "But it will be all right. Go ahead, do" (Kawabata 1969: 104). Based on this consent, the girl gives her arm to the protagonist that is later incorporated into his body. Therefore, the girl is not necessarily in a passive position to be simply possessed by the protagonist; consent for the displacement of the body is involved, as the girl allows her arm to leave her body and go to the protagonist.

Although 'One Arm' can be read as a story of bold bodily incorporation, it also illuminates an uncertainty about touch; does the protagonist really touch the girl? One questions this first because of the distance between the girl's partial body as the arm and her whole body; and because of the enormous effect that the subtle touch has on the protagonist. He narrates, 'It seemed to me that the arm and the girl herself were an infinity apart' (Kawabata 1969: 111), writing of the girl's whole body as *botai* (the mother's body) (Kawabata 1967: 148). Therefore, it seems as if, in touching, he is eternally unreachable to the whole presence of her body. Her appearance as one arm rather than the whole body also seems to give him easier access to her, since he could keep escaping from the visibility of the body – from his own because she does not possess the eyes to directly look at him, and from

⁴ See *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Heidegger 1995). *Différance*, known as a Derridean term, indicates both temporal deferral and difference. Derrida considers touch as 'con-tact'; 'contact' with alterity, which instead interrupts contact (Derrida 2005: 34, 63, 70), while deconstructing Merleau-Pontean reflexive touch and solipsism. Nancy, with the influences both from deconstruction and phenomenology, writes about withdrawal of touch even as a form of benediction in Christian context (Nancy 2008).

hers because she is not the 'whole' body. But her arm, though a partial body, essentially functions as if it were the totality of her body; it listens to and 'talks' to him, moves, and watches him. Therefore we read, 'The arm watched me change. I was shy at being watched. Never before had a woman watched me undress in my room' (Kawabata 1969: 116), the arm functioning as a whole. He communicates with her arm that is the whole, but without pressure on him since it is visually an arm rather than the whole female body. The sense of unreachability in the distance between the girl's whole body and her partial body makes surface contact between the protagonist and the girl more special, constantly hovering between the partiality and the totality of the body. Moreover, another reason for an uncertainty about touch in this story stems from the large effect that the subtle surface contact has on the protagonist. He narrates:

Earlier, when I had touched the fingertips under the long nails, the light passing over the arm as the elbow bent had caught my eye. It was that, and not any impulse toward mischief, that had made me bend and unbend her arm. I stopped, and gazed at it as it lay stretched out on my knee. Fresh lights and shadows were still passing over it. (Kawabata 1969: 113)

Even subtle touch, which barely connects with the other, has a whole-body effect on him, to the extent that his consciousness vacillates between appearance and disappearance: 'The long, narrow, delicate nail scratched gently at the palm of my hand, and the slight touch made my sleep deeper. I disappeared' (Kawabata 1969: 123).

Conversely, the drama of this story lies in the fact that such delicacy could become an acute rupture with the other in a diabolic moment by throwing her arm from his body; as literary scholar Susan Napier states, 'insisting on the essential isolation between individuals, the fundamental inability to connect' (Napier 1996: 65). In 'One Arm', since the girl gave the protagonist permission to replace her right arm with his, he actualises it. Soon after he substitutes his arm with hers, there is a spasm, break and disjunction between the arm and

shoulder. The protagonist narrates:

I noticed something. I could feel the girl's fingers in my mouth, but the fingers of her right hand, now those of my own right hand, could not feel my lips or teeth. In panic I shook my right arm and could not feel the shaking. There was a break, a stop, between arm and shoulder. (Kawabata 1969: 119)

In the next moment, he is immediately concerned by the blood, worried about whether the blood is coming and going between his shoulder and her arm, which is connected to his body, and if the blood is circulating in his arm, which has fallen beside him. When her arm covers his ear, he continues by saying, '[i]t was now my own right arm, but the motion seemed to have come not of my volition but of its [girl's arm] own, from its heart. Yet the separation was by no means so complete' (Kawabata 1969: 120). Then, they listen to the sound of the pulse.

The blood starts flowing through the arms. He no longer feels any shuddering or spasm:

There was no dramatic awareness that between the arm and my shoulder the blood came and went. My left hand, enfolding my right shoulder, and the shoulder itself, now mine, had a natural understanding of the fact. They had come to know it. The knowledge pulled them down into slumber. (Kawabata 1969: 123)

He sleeps. When he wakes suddenly with a scream, 'to the touch of something repulsive' (Kawabata 1969: 123), his right arm, he tears the arm from his shoulder and puts his own arm back, trembling. 'The act was like murder upon a sudden, diabolic impulse' (Kawabata 1969: 124). When he regains his composure, the girl's arm is laying on the bed, still and whitening. He embraces it like a dying baby.

If the condition of what Levinas would call 'a fecund being' is to be capable of another fate than its own (Levinas 1969: 282), what is the spasm between the arms of the man and the girl, incurred by incorporation? In the next section, while making a dialogue with the Kleinian account of incorporation, I problematise the (im)possibility of accepting the alterity of another's body via incorporation in Kawabata and explore the ethics of incorporation.

Ethics of incorporation

In this story, there coexist two very different types of contact: subtle surface touch, which would be close to the touch suggested by Levinas as well as Kawabata; and incorporation, including taking in the body part and wrenching it off. A reason for these very different bodily contacts performed all of a sudden would be an acute ethical rupture that momentarily went beyond the protagonist's control. I would like to analyse in this section the ethical aspects of incorporation and compromise with the otherness inside one body in Kawabata. With this purpose in mind, it would be worthwhile to pay attention to the concept of 'incorporation' in psychoanalysis, as psychoanalytic incorporation, especially that of Klein, examines the internal-external dynamic in the realm of fantasy. I will read incorporation in Kawabata, together with Klein's theory, in order to advance our understanding of psychical dimensions regarding incorporation and to further ponder its ethical aspects.

Klein developed theories related to incorporation, internalising a good object and projecting a bad feeling or splitting off a bad object. In her theory, babies internalise a 'good object', based on the prototype of encounter with the mother's breast, the absence of which gives rise to further developmental positions such as paranoid-schizophrenic and depressive disorders. Klein's paranoid-schizo position is characterised by fragmentation, through mechanisms such as splitting off, projecting and denying the bad part of oneself or the object onto the bad mother/persecutor. The depressive position is characterised by ambivalence, through mechanisms such as the recognition that good and bad objects are different aspects of the same object. For Klein, incorporation also involves 'cannibalistic' fantasies; 'the child's gratification of being fed is not only felt to be a cannibalistic incorporation of external objects [...] but also sets going cannibalistic phantasies relating to the internalized loved objects and

connects with the control over these objects' (Klein 1987: 143). Klein's incorporation is almost like the devouring of a loved object to keep it intact. Despite her focus on children's psychic development, her theory is still helpful in thinking about the relationship between love and objects in Kawabata, due to its particular attention to psychic object relations.

The reasons why Klein's theory is useful in analysing Kawabata's 'One Arm' are not limited to the fact that theoretical and literal creations by these two heavily rely on fantasy, and that observation-based Kleinian theories focused on the mother may be cross-culturally adaptable in the Japanese psychic climate. It is also that, in both cases, the subject knows the impermanence of a particular object's possession. The protagonist knows that there will be an end, sometime soon, of having his loved object. Knowing that he needs to return the girl's arm the next day, the protagonist narrates,

The clean blood of the girl was now, this very moment, flowing through me; but would there not be unpleasantness when the arm was returned to the girl, this dirty male blood flowing through it? What if it would not attach itself to her shoulder? (Kawabata 1969: 122)

Similarly, Klein's subject is always anticipating the loss of the object. Klein, in an article about the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states, writes, 'I consider the depressive state as being the result of a mixture of paranoid anxiety and of those anxiety contents, distressed feelings and defences which are connected with the impending loss of the whole loved object' (Klein 1987: 130–131). Also for Klein, not only 'bad objects' but also internalised 'good objects' are in danger of menace by unconscious aggression, because it is 'not only the vehemence of the subject's uncontrollable hatred but that of his love too which imperils the object' (Klein 1987: 120–121). Loving an object and devouring it is almost different sides of the same coin in Klein. She writes, 'It now becomes plain why, at this phase of development, the ego feels itself constantly menaced in its possession of internalized good objects. It is full

of anxiety lest such objects should die' (Klein 1987: 121). One suffers from the fear of impending loss of the loved object because of love and the wish to possess it eternally, though this is unrealisable.

This struggle of possessing or dispossessing goes with the feeling of love that progresses from the part to the whole, although the incorporation itself can happen with a partial object. Klein writes:

[...] the ego comes to a realization of its love for a good object, a whole object and in addition a real object, together with an overwhelming feeling of guilt towards it. Full identification with the object based on the libidinal attachment, first to the breast, then to the whole person, goes hand in hand with anxiety for it (of its disintegration), with guilt and remorse, with a sense of responsibility for preserving it intact against persecutors and the id, and with sadness relating to expectation of the impending loss of it. These emotions, whether conscious or unconscious, are in my view among the essential and fundamental elements of the feelings we call love. (Klein 1987: 125)

In 'One Arm', when the girl gives the protagonist permission, he supposedly already has the intention to incorporate her arm sometime soon. In the actual process of knowing her arm – through his talking with her, observing the light reflected on her arm, and spending time together – he becomes attracted to it. Her body part, becoming more than the arm, becomes the whole, as Klein suggests, especially through identifying the pulse of the girl's arm with his heartbeat:

There was a delicate pulse at the girl's wrist. It lay over my heart, so that the two pulses sounded against each other. Hers was at first somewhat slower than mine, then they were together. And then I could feel only mine. I did not know which was faster, which slower.

Perhaps this identity of pulse and heartbeat was for a brief period when I might try to exchange the arm for my own. Or had it gone to sleep? I had once heard a woman say that women were less happy in the throes of ecstasy than sleeping peacefully beside their men; but never before had a woman slept beside me as peacefully as this arm. (Kawabata 1969: 118)

The presence of her arm next to him signifies that of the whole female body. He is

soothed by the presence of her arm, and the incorporation of the loved object unfolds:

I turned on the light. I put my hands to the fingers and shoulder and pulled the arm straight. I turned it quietly in my hands, gazing at the play of light and shadow, from the roundness at the shoulder over the narrowing and swelling of the forearm, the narrowing again at the gentle roundness of the elbow, the faint depression inside the elbow, the narrowing roundness to the wrist, the palm and back of the hand, and on to the fingers.

‘I’ll have it.’ I was not conscious of muttering the words.
In a trance, I removed my right arm and substituted the girl’s.

There was a slight gasp—whether from the arm or from me I could not tell—and a spasm at my shoulder. So I knew of the change. (Kawabata 1969: 118–119)

The protagonist incorporates her arm, which has now become his loved object, even without noticing.

This surreal incorporation of one arm is a fantasy Kawabata created. Being ‘overtly “postmodern” in style and setting’, as Napier says of this specific story, ‘anything can happen’ (Napier 1996: 64). But, as we witness, physical incorporation causes an inescapable spasm with the arm, the repulsive touch of his arm and wrenching of the girl’s arm off at the end. After all, this fantasy of incorporation and being with the loved object do not exceed the realm of fantasy. Napier writes, ‘Although the “I” has initially tried to bridge the difference between self and Other, in the long run he is unable to maintain such unity for long’ (Napier 1996: 66), as a paranoid reaction to women and withdrawal.⁵ Saitō discusses an example of *hikikomori* in recent Japan as a shift from projective identification to imaginary paranoia-schizo in the Kleinian sense through withdrawal from actual interpersonal relationships into the self-closed space (Saitō 2003: 149). Through the Kleinian framework, withdrawal from touch in Kawabata can be read as a paranoid reaction to the actual

⁵ Napier uses this ‘I’ constantly to mean the male protagonist in her essay, but when the girl says “‘I’ve gotten very warm”” (Kawabata 1969: 119) after the incorporation, the protagonist receives an impression that the girl used the first person pronoun (*atashi*) for the first time, though its use is not the first appearance. Neither Napier’s essay nor the English translation mention this newly appeared ‘I’.

engagement with women. Also, it is not entirely oral, anal nor genital incorporation, except the scene soon after the incorporation in which he has her fingers in his mouth due to a shudder (Kawabata 1969: 119). Napier recognises a sexual component in the girl's arm, saying 'the scene where he attaches the arm in the first place is reminiscent of first intercourse, as the arm trembles in shock when the man attaches it to himself' (Napier 1996: 66). But it is not exclusively a sexual component: 'the arm, although clearly erotic, also has obvious elements of the maternal to it as well' (Napier 1996: 65), as when it embraces the protagonist's neck or when the maternal role is reversed in the final scene in which the protagonist embraces the girl's dying arm. Without being necessarily limited to either the erotic or maternal, this story shows ambivalent feelings of what Klein calls 'a sense of responsibility for preserving it intact' and 'sadness relating to expectation of the impending loss of it' (Klein 1987: 125), precisely because of the presence of love.

Klein, starting from the actual observation of a child, especially on its psychological dynamics, thinks that children will always face disappointments in their development – for example, the fact that they cannot take in every good object; even more so for the girl due to her impossible Oedipal wishes towards her mother (Klein 1987: 70). Also, children, starting with the mother's breast, realise they must lose the object even if they can hold it momentarily. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the sadness of losing the loved object in Klein has a particular relation to the sense of temporality. In addition, incorporation, being terminologically differentiated from introjection, signifies a greater sense of bodily frontier. Laplanche and Pontalis explain, '[i]n psychoanalysis the bounds of the body provide the model of all separations between an inside and an outside. Incorporation involves this bodily frontier literally. Introjection has a broader meaning in that it is no longer a matter only of the interior of the body but also that of the psychical apparatus, of a psychical agency, etc'

(Laplanche and Pontalis 1988: 230). Because of this, the sense of loss can be even more significant in the case of incorporation, in which one loses the presence of the body (part) both as psychic fantasy and corporeal reality.

However, psychoanalytic theory may suffer when it comes to an ethical question, ‘a sense of responsibility’ (Klein 1987: 125) for preserving the loved object intact. The psychoanalytic subject struggles to keep the good objects, out of anxiety about losing them, or through the dread of internalised persecutors. But there is no question of the object’s standpoint; it does not matter what the object feels regarding incorporation, because it is considered as an ego-less object in Klein. The mother’s breast, the prototype of a good object, cannot say ‘no!’ to be sucked and incorporated by her babies, since it potentially means the death of the loved babies. The mechanism of incorporation should be basically the same either for object, animal, or human. But when the incorporated object has an active ego that can deny, neglect or betray, the responsibility to preserve the loved object intact, which Klein mentions, does not fully make sense, apart from within the fantasies of psychoanalytic subject.

In ‘One Arm’, where the disruption and affection regarding contact is prominent, this raises various ethical questions. Particularly, the alterity sensed through incorporation and the absence of negotiation in the end impart the subtle sadness of bodily communication. It is a sadness from Klein’s ‘impending loss’ of a loved object, but perhaps also the sadness that stems from the inability to accept another’s life within oneself. As quoted earlier, Levinas writes, ‘A being capable of another fate than its own is a fecund being’ (Levinas 1969: 282). But this fecundity of Levinas is, Cathryn Vasseleu suggests, ‘an escape from the universal or time of history that is not achieved with, but away from the feminine’ (Vasseleu 1998: 107), since Levinas’ beloved is not necessarily in the tangible present but in the unknowable future.

The bodily incorporation and the following sensations caused by the alterity of the other's body further complicate ethical (including gender) aspects of physical contact in Kawabata, bridging Klein's lack of attention to the standpoint of the incorporated object and Levinas' withdrawal from touch in the present (and Irigaray's critique on it). In the next section, this essay will expand the discussion of ethics regarding incorporation to include different forms of touch (such as caress, gesture and withdrawal) and temporality.

Withdrawal from touch in the present

Hesitance and deferral of touch is, as discussed earlier, often observed in Kawabata, but is also applicable to Levinas. Levinas and Irigaray often discuss touch, but, in writing, rarely enact it in the present. Levinas problematically phrases the beloved as *aimée* (Levinas 1969: 256, footnote), grammatically indicating a female beloved who is untouchable and 'future in the present' (Levinas 1969: 258). As opposed to the expectation of the other as 'infinity', the beloved is conversely enclosed in the specific temporality beyond the present,:

The caress is a mode of the subject's being, where the subject who is in contact with another goes beyond this contact. Contact as sensation is part of the world of light. But what is caressed is not touched, properly speaking. It is not the softness or warmth of the hand given in contact that the caress seeks. The seeking of the caress constitutes its essence by the fact that the caress does not know what it seeks. This 'not knowing,' this fundamental disorder, is the essential. [...] The caress is the anticipation of this pure future [*avenir*], without content. (Levinas 1987: 89)

Rather than suffering from the impending loss of the loved object, Levinas' male subject enjoys anticipating an encounter with the loved object in the future. Yet, this unrealisation of touch is not always the product of male fantasy for Vasseleu, as she problematises Irigaray's caress:

The caress is not so much a touch as it is the gesture of touch, an alternation between movement and posture, simultaneously dissolving

and constituting itself without memory or distinction. This gesture is a never-to-be-grasped beginning, an attraction without consummation, always on the threshold of appetite, not yet anticipating or yearning an other. The caress affirms and protects its infinite otherness in the prolongation of a birth which will never come to pass. (Vasseleu 1998: 114)

Irigaray resists the dream of male transcendence and recoils at its revulsion from contact, ‘forgetting of a vital threshold—the tactile’ (Irigaray 2004: 177). Opposing Levinas, where real encounters are substituted by the nocturnal dream or recoiled from actualisation, Irigaray states, ‘[t]he other cannot be transformed into discourse, fantasies, or dreams. It is impossible for me to substitute any other, thing or god, for the other—because of this touching of and by him, which my body remembers’ (Irigaray 2004: 179). Although Irigaray tries to reserve the embodied tactile memory in the female body and she employs particular concepts of surface such as of membrane, mucosa and threshold, the body is embraced in gesture and not necessarily *touched*, mystifying the exact point of contact. Exploring the possibility of ‘invisible’ touch, as opposed to the kind of touch discussed by Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Levinas, which subjects touch ‘to sight or to some ideal’ (Irigaray 2011: 137), Irigaray again mystifies touch: ‘This invisible cannot be seized or be understood’ (Irigaray 2011: 138).

The theoretical problematics above question whether the body really encounters another body. Levinas’ encounter occurs not in the present but in the infinite future, preserving alterity discontinuously and rendering the encounter with the other as a rupture: ‘The work of time goes beyond the suspension of the definitive which the continuity of duration makes possible. There must be a rupture of continuity, and continuation across this rupture’ (Levinas 1969: 283–284). Irigaray, on the other hand, admits the encounter in the present, but in over-emphasising embodied memory left on the female body, she may miss the

pardon to be given in future. There are two pardons in 'One Arm'. One is given to the protagonist by the girl who lends her arm; the other is given to the protagonist by a different woman who decides to give herself to him. The protagonist retrospectively narrates about the woman's pardon:

'Please,' she had said, gazing at me. I had put my fingers to her eyelids and closed them. Her voice was trembling. "Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved her!"

'Her' was a mistake for 'him.' It was the story of the dead Lazarus. Perhaps, herself a woman, she had remembered it wrong, perhaps she had made the substitution intentionally.

The words, so inappropriate to the scene, had shaken me. I gazed at her, wondering if tears would start from the closed eyes. (Kawabata 1969: 114)⁶

Although the substitution of gender here is another intriguing point since it creates another 'beloved' female, this pardon is given to be actualised, not in an unknown time but in an impending future. The feminine in Irigaray insists upon the unforgettability of the inhibited memory, but neither this sense of permission nor a consent that may be exchanged between those who touch is discussed in Irigaray's encounter. In 'One Arm', both physical exchange with the other woman above and the replacement with the girl's arm occur through the consent between the male protagonist and female figures. In addition, when the protagonist is contemplating whether the one arm can be safely returned and attached to the girl's body and whether it would be unpleasant to have 'dirty male blood' flowing in the girl's body (Kawabata 1969: 122), he mutters, "[n]o such betrayal", and the arm whispers, "[i]t will be all right" (Kawabata 1969: 123). Physical incorporations in 'One Arm' are driven not exclusively by the male protagonist's fantasy but through consent between those who touch.

⁶ The Bible says, 'Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"' (John 11: 35–37).

Irigaray searches for the cultivation of touch, starting from the discussion of hearing and sight, and turning to invisible touch in order to share sexual energy, given a ‘tragic destiny’ that ‘we are two humans irreducible to one another’ (Irigaray 2011: 136). Although this touch is embodied, Irigaray’s irreducibility is fundamentally based on sexual difference. By emphasising the productivity of the maternal body, she tends to focus on the erotic component of touch, such that the greatest form of intimacy suggested by Irigaray is erotic unity (Irigaray 2011: 137–139). But since incorporation in Kawabata as well as Klein is not limited to sexual kinds, and the sadness of being unable to accept otherness speaks of an ambivalent feeling (of love and rejection, desire and hesitance, affection and repulsion), ‘the sharing’ between the protagonist and the girl is not exclusively erotic. The communication between the protagonist and the girl’s arm proceeds not necessarily through a visible mark, gesture or abstract erotic energy, but through the concrete experience of feeling warmth and listening. The two sense the warmth of their bodies, and listen to the pulse, heartbeat and the blood coming and going between the two, through one of the most visceral ways of knowing the other.

A detailed research on pulse-taking in ancient Greece and China by medical historian Kuriyama Shigehisa shows one mode of bodily knowing that necessarily occurs in the present. While Greek sphygmologist Galen’s understanding of a pulse is comprised of four parts: the diastole, the rest, the systole, and the rest (Kuriyama 1999: 36), Chinese pulse-taking *mo* (脈) diagnoses not only the heart but all the viscera. *Mo* indicates the flow of the blood coming and going, as opposed to the pulse, which is more about rhythm. Kuriyama explains, ‘[i]n medical texts the *mo* sometimes “moves” (*dong*) and only rarely “beats” (*bo*). Most often, it arrives (*lai*), departs (*qu*), travels (*xing*), and flows (*liu*)’ (Kuriyama 1999: 51). Since it is not easy to identify the duration of motions and rests, the systole and diastole, only through the

rhythm without any visual aids, Kuriyama writes about the arguments made by Greek sphygmologists of whether the artery's systole can really be felt:

Try, yourself, to perceive more than beats and pauses, to follow the swell and fall of the artery. [...] Did you really feel the contraction? Or just imagine it? How can you be sure? The motion is so quick. You probably would never feel it if you didn't anticipate it. But does the anticipation then corrupt the experience? (Kuriyama 1999: 35)

This cross-cultural practice of pulse-taking may signal that the delicate touch discussed earlier in this paper may still remain in a visible realm. If the body is contoured through touch, stroke and subtle caresses, while showing an embodied 'mark', the touch is visible or invisible, or possibly in between. However, Kawabata's 'One Arm' shows that bodily contact is sensible through warmth and texture, or audible through heartbeat and blood flow. The protagonist comes to negotiate with the girl's alterity without reducing her otherness in his sameness in the middle of the story through a consonance in pulse and heartbeat via incorporation, even if it would not last long. One can picture the body by touching. But touching and listening to the other, not in order to visualise but to sense, may enable one to embrace more of the other's body.

Conclusion: Toward the rupture of contact

In this story, there are consecutive ruptures both in bodily and ethical senses: the sudden realisation of having incorporated another's body part, having thrown off his own body part and then wrenching off the girl's arm at the end. Levinas is right in saying that the discontinuity of time or a rupture of continuity renews and resuscitates the time to come. To continue, one needs disruptions, just as one needs interruptions, gaps and distance to make contact in Nancean sense. But it should be in the present or the dislocated temporality that is not the unknown, infinite future. Otherwise, the rupture cannot perform the encounter. Surface

touch in Kawabata and Levinas concerns subtlety, lightness and delicacy of touch. Simultaneously, the girl is not necessarily the person who resists incorporation in ‘One Arm’; the protagonist himself resists the incorporation of another’s body, which creates a physical rupture from his side. As this sudden separation of being unable to accept the alterity of another’s body shows, bodies are in contact not just through surface touch. They also meet, as this story of incorporation demonstrates, when they intersect, reject and separate; arise, collide and strive. Sudden rupture of contact, in both bodily and ethical senses, in a way conditions the possibility of touching, incorporating and sharing another’s body. What makes incorporation or even surface touch possible is the very rupture of contact. The encounter with the other *touches* us in the very oscillation between the possibility to accept otherness and sadness of its impossibility.

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